

## **RIF-Related Frequently Asked Questions**

### **When will a decision be made regarding whether or not a RIF will occur?**

The NASA Administrator has indicated that he will make that decision in June of 2006.

### **How can I get the OPM RIF Briefing handout?**

Unfortunately, OPM was not able to leave the handout with us. Although the OPM Restructuring Group is a government entity, because they are fee-for-service, they own the presentation and communicated to us that they were not able to distribute it to us. They did, however, send us another document to share with employees, the Employee Guide to RIF (see the website for this link). This document provides far more detail about the mechanics of RIF, especially for those who were unable to attend the briefings.

### **Will those of us who were unable to attend the briefing have another opportunity to see it?**

We are exploring the possibility of contracting with OPM to present additional briefings, possibly in the late winter/early spring timeframe.

### **What is this “go-to” organization I keep hearing about?**

Every Directorate and Office has been given numbers, based on what we know today about the work that we can expect for our Center in FY07. Directorates have been tasked with developing a go-to organization to support the numbers and the work.

### **Who will determine which positions to abolish, and how will it be determined?**

Once the go-to organization is finalized, management will identify which positions are necessary to fulfill the work requirements based on the mission of the organization. Only then will we be able to identify work that will no longer be needed, as well as the specific positions identified with that work.

### **I am in a position that is currently unfunded. Does this mean that I will be RIF'ed?**

Not necessarily. As noted above, management must identify those positions required to support the mission (i.e., the go-to organization), and then identify those positions which are no longer required in the new organization. Some of those positions identified for abolishment are likely to be positions that are currently unfunded. Keep in mind that if a position is impacted in Round 1 of RIF, employees may still have placement options in Round 2.

### **I need clarification regarding the uncovered capacity numbers—is it 500 now? What about the 145 number that the Center Director mentioned recently in the Alabama press?**

The FY07 uncovered capacity is currently approximately 550. The number that the Center Director referred to was the uncovered capacity number for FY06 as of that day. Keep in mind that the uncovered capacity number changes almost daily based on updated guidelines received from HQ.

**Is the focus of the go to organizational structure (numbers) effective for the start of FY 07?**

Yes.

**If we aren't sure whether there will even be a RIF, why is so much effort going into preparing for one?**

Because of the time that it requires to properly prepare for a RIF, we have to begin preparing now in case we are required to resort to one in FY 07 or beyond. As you are aware, there are a number of preparatory activities going on now, such as review of all position descriptions, review of every employee's Official Personnel Folder, and soon we will ask all employees to submit a RIF Resume, in order to begin assessing placement opportunities in the event of a RIF.

**I've heard that I will be asked to submit a RIF Resume. What is this, and when will I know more about it?**

The RIF Resume is an important part of the RIF preparation activity. Every employee is encouraged to submit a resume that details their work history. The resume will supplement our review of each employee's Official Personnel Folder to determine potential bump and retreat options in the event of a RIF. The official call for resumes will go out toward the end of November, in a letter to every civil servant. We will post a resume template and sample resume on our Workforce Transformation website as soon as it is finalized. The CTAP Office will also begin running training sessions for employees, to help them develop their RIF Resume, toward the beginning of December. We strongly encourage all employees to submit a RIF Resume.

**When can I see the retention register?**

An employee is entitled to see that portion of the retention register that applies to him or her only after receiving a specific RIF notice.

**During the recent OPM RIF presentations, the instructor mentioned that states vary with regard to unemployment compensation in the event of a RIF. What is the State of Ohio's policy?**

OHRWP is currently working with Ohio's State Unemployment Office and our own payroll office to determine exactly what civil servants will be eligible for in the event of a

RIF. We will post a more detailed answer to this question as soon as we have all of the facts.

**I've heard that if there is a RIF and my first eligibility date falls after the RIF, I may still be able to retire. Can you explain?**

If your date of first eligibility for retirement falls beyond the RIF effective date, and if you have enough annual leave on the books to take you to that first eligibility date, the Agency may keep you on the rolls, on annual leave, until that date beyond the RIF so that you may retire.

**If I am separated in a RIF and I am eligible for retirement, will I receive severance pay?**

No. If you are eligible for any type of retirement (e.g., full, early, MRA+10), or if you are retired military, you are not eligible for severance pay.

**I will not be eligible for retirement for many years. How can I find out what my severance pay would be if I am separated in a RIF?**

The easiest way to see your potential severance pay is to use the automatic calculator on this website: <http://benefitstatement.nasa.gov/html/index.htm> Log on to NEBS, and go to Section L of your benefits statement to see what your severance pay would be.

**I am a term employee. What happens to me in a RIF?**

This depends very much on whether your position is abolished, or whether other employees have bump or retreat rights to your position. If your position is abolished, or if another employee bumps or retreats into our position, unfortunately, you normally do not have further placement rights and will be issued a separation notice.

**If a position requires a clearance, is it given a separate competitive level code?**

No, clearance level is not a factor in RIF placement. If another employee qualifies for the position, he or she may bump or retreat into it, even if he or she does not have a clearance; in such a situation, the employee will not have access to the classified information until his or her clearance is approved.

**I've heard that there were quotas on the number of "Distinguished" ratings that could be issued after the last performance appraisal cycle. Is this true?**

No. There are and were absolutely no quotas placed on the number of Distinguished ratings awarded. As always, managers were instructed to honestly assess the performance of each employee and assign the most appropriate rating accordingly.

**When will we know how many years credit will be awarded for each performance level (i.e., Distinguished, Meets or Exceeds Expectations, Unsatisfactory)?**

HQ makes this determination for the entire Agency. No final decision has been communicated yet. When we know the final results, we will post them to this website.

**I recently received an award. Will this affect my RIF standing?**

No, awards are not a placement factor in RIF.

**Can you explain what competitive level codes are?**

Competitive level codes are the grouping of like positions where the duties, skills, qualifications, and training requirements are so similar that the positions are interchangeable, so all employees occupying the positions can perform the work without undue interruption to the mission. Center supervisors recently updated all position descriptions; OHRWP is now reviewing all position descriptions and, together with subject matter experts, will determine appropriate competitive level definitions and codes.

**How many positions will receive a new competitive level code?**

Every employee at the Center can expect to receive official notification (via an SF-50) that their competitive level code has changed. This is because our new payroll/personnel system, FPPS, can accommodate only a three-character field (we currently assign four character competitive level codes to our positions). We anticipate that some competitive level codes will also change due to the position description review exercise.

**Why are some of the position descriptions at the Center being rewritten?**

Position descriptions are being rewritten in order to better describe the work being performed. Many position descriptions are 10+ years old, many were never updated after prior reorganizations, and many are simply out of date and no longer reflect the work of the position or organization.

**Can employees be placed in a position with a lower grade than that which the employee currently holds? Are there any other options available?**

If an employee's best offer under RIF is to a lower graded position, he or she will have the opportunity to accept or reject it. However, if the employee turns down the offer, then he or she will be involuntarily separated.

Each employee has a range of grades within which he or she is considered for placement. The ceiling or top of this range is the employee's present grade. The floor or bottom of the range is the three grades or three grade intervals below the present grade (note: for 30% or more compensably disabled veterans, however, they have retreat rights up to five

grades below their current grade). What that floor is for you depends on the type of position you hold. Examples are discussed in the Employees Guide to RIF

**If you are reached in a RIF, can you still retire if you are eligible?**

Yes; in fact, if you are separated as a result of RIF and are eligible for any type of retirement, you will be separated as a retirement. Please note that you would not be eligible for severance pay.

**Please explain grade and pay retention.**

Grade retention applies to a person who is placed in a lower graded job as the result of a RIF. It means that for pay and other purposes, you retain the grade held before the effective date of the change to lower grade. Grade retention lasts for two years, beginning with the date of change to lower grade. You keep the higher grade even though working in a lower graded position.

An employee whose grade retention period ends may receive pay retention. Pay retention means you keep your former rate of pay. In RIF, this occurs (1) when the period of grade retention ends, or (2) when the employee affected by RIF does not meet the eligibility requirements for grade retention (such as serving less than 52 weeks at a higher grade). Pay retention lasts until the employee's pay rate catches up to an actual step rate in the grade to which he or she is placed.

**If an employee is offered a position in a RIF and turns it down, what happens next?**

If an employee is offered a position via a specific RIF offer and turns it down, he or she will be separated. An employee's entitlements will be explained in a specific RIF offer. An employee is entitled to only one offer at a time. However, if an employee has not turned down the original offer and a better offer becomes available on or before the RIF effective date, then the employee is entitled to the better offer, and will be notified via a new RIF notice.

**Where can I find the Federal regulations used in conducting RIF?**

Title 5 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 351 (Reduction in Force Procedures) is the pertinent regulation.